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Inventory for
Manuscript Collection
MS-69

Portland Seamen's Friend Society Records

Inclusive dates: 1926-1975
Bulk dates: 1933-1947

by
Tracy Lamaestra and Anastasia Weigle
(assistance from Cathy Hopkins)
June 2012

Shelf feet: .5 linear feet
Number of boxes: 1
Accession 89.8

Cataloged as part of the Merchant Mariners Muster Project, funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation through the Council on Library and Information Resources

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Abstract

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Portland Seamen's Friend Society

Records, 1926-1975 (Bulk dates: 1933-1947)

1 box, (.5 Shelf feet)

Society to benefit seamen, Portland, Maine.

Records of the Portland Seamen's Friend Society includes background history, correspondence, financial records, seamen's papers, legal papers and some personal papers of Charles B. Rodway. The Portland Seamen's Friend Society provided food, entertainment, libraries, lodging, visitation, spiritual needs and general advocacy for sailors. The Portland Seamen's Friend Society records are organized as follows: Series I—Portland Seamen's Friend Society, Series II—Joseph R. How Trust Fund/Estate, Series III—Seamen's Agencies Group, National Conference of Social Works, Series IV—Sailors' Snug Harbor and Series V—Personal Papers.

Donated by Frank Rodway on February 2, 1989.

MS-69. Accession No. 89.8.

Related material available at repository, PC-293.

Finding aid available in repository; folder level control

Added entries—persons:

Fiander, Joseph L., *Captain*

How, Joseph R.

Rodway, Charles Burton

Rodway, Frank C.

Added entries—corporate bodies (including vessels)

National Conference of Social Work

Oakey L. Alexander (Screw steamer, freight)

Portland Marine Society

Portland Seamen's Bethel

Portland Seamen's Friend Society

Sailor's Snug Harbor

Seamen's Agencies

Added entries—key terms:

Administration of estates

Letters

Merchant seamen

Merchant seamen--Missions and charities

Seamanship

Societies

Acquisition

Frank Rodway donated The Portland Seamen's Bethel Records the Maine Maritime Museum on February 2, 1989, accession no. 89.8

Provenance

The Portland Seamen's Friend Society records were held by family members before coming to the Maine Maritime Museum in 1989. The donor Frank Rodway was the son of Charles B. Rodway, the Superintendent of the Portland Seamen's Friend Society.

Restrictions

There are no restrictions on the study or use of these materials.

Physical Condition

Most of the records are in good physical condition. Some manuscripts are discolored and stained. Others have creases with minor tears on edges or fold lines. These were repaired with thin, transparent document repair tape. Those with heavier crease lines were flattened with a tacking iron at low to medium heat. Fragile and brittle documents were sleeved in Melinex or archival Mylar. Several records are of fine tissue paper and should be handled with care. There are only small portions of Certificates of Discharge papers for seamen. These documents were all sleeved in Mylar.

Processing Notes

The Portland Seamen's Bethel records already had some semblance of order, so organizing the collection was not difficult. The records are organized chronologically within each folder. All correspondence are identified as incoming or outgoing incoming. Records are sorted into series and subseries. Photographs found in the collection were removed and made into a separate photograph collection PC-283.

Historical Notes

Portland Seamen's Friend Society

The origin of missionary work among seamen is believed to have been in London, England in 1814. This same type of work began in America about 1816. Reverend Ward Howard, a New York City missionary, started meetings for seamen in a school room Similar efforts began in Boston (1818), Philadelphia (1819) and eventually spread to seaports all along the Atlantic Coast and Gulf of Mexico.[1] The use of the term Bethel (a Hebrew word meaning

"house of God") to describe a church for seamen is believed to have begun in the United States before 1840.[9]

The first strides in establishing a church and a place of fellowship for seamen in Portland, Maine began in 1820. The first seamen's church was established in 1828. Later a church was organized in 1840 by leaders Dr. Edward Payson, Jotham Sewall and William Jenks. Reverend Francis B. Southworth became pastor in 1865 of this Seamen's Bethel Church. A church for seamen was erected at 283 Fore Street, but was destroyed by fire in 1866. Southworth secured funds for the building of a new facility in 1867 and another Bethel Church was opened at the same location. A Sailor's Home was built for seamen about 1855 at the corner of India and Middle Streets as well. Captain C. T. Bailey was manager in 1914 with a board of trustees: Eben Steel, J. B. Brown, W. W. Thomas, Ira P. Farrington, Jacob McClellan, Washington Ryan, Samuel Taylor and Joshua Maxwell.[2]

The Portland Seamen's Friend Society was organized on December 22, 1865 to "promote the temporal and spiritual welfare of the seamen of Portland."[3] This society took over the work of the Seamen's Bethel Church and the care of the Sailor's Home by consolidating into a single organization. The Portland Seamen's Friend Society was incorporated on November 4, 1876. The first officers were Eben Steel-President, W.W. Thomas and Washington Ryan-Vice Presidents, Francis Southworth-Secretary and J. C. Brook-Treasurer.[4]

Charles B. Rodway came to the organization on August 3, 1933 as Superintendent. The Portland Seamen's Friend Society moved its headquarters to 11 Exchange Street in 1933. The organization was composed of a board of trustees and superintendent. The Society expanded in 1939 by moving to the first floor of 15 Exchange Street. At this time, the Society adopted an additional name Seamen's Bethel. The Bethel was supported by a small endowment fund along with public and private donations.[5]

The society provided baggage checking for sailors. Since most belongings of sailors were contained in bags or suitcases, the Bethel offered a safe place for the keeping of property during sailors stays ashore. Employment services were offered to stranded seamen through visits by representatives and a register of seamen names kept at headquarters for those desiring work. Advocacy was provided for admission to Sailors' Snug Harbor and naturalization.

There were also free literature distributions to seamen. Magazines and books were supplied to ships. In 1938, the organization handed out 6690 magazines to vessels. Literature was distributed in nine different languages. This also included the seamen in hospitals and public institutions in addition to the ship libraries. A reading room was maintained with available reading material by the Seamen's Bethel. This room measured 35 feet long by 18 feet wide and contained chairs, table, and a piano.[6]

Gospel services were conducted for seamen ashore and aboard ships. Services were held every Sunday evening given by the Superintendent. Clothing and lodging were supplied to seamen as well. Money was provided to those in need of transportation to home or ports where employment was secured. Mailing service of stationary supplies and a facility to receive or forward mail was offered. The group also furnished Christmas and Thanksgiving dinners, entertainment and gave out meals to sailors. Seamen were visited in the Marine Hospital, jail and prison by members.

Captain Joseph R. How bequeathed $1000 in a trust fund to aid indigent seamen in Maine. By the 1980s, the amount had grown to over $400,000. Most of the income was distributed to poor, elderly seamen living in Maine.[7] The organization had a variety of names

over the years: Portland Seamen's Bethel, Portland Seamen's Friend Society, Portland Seamen's Society, Seamen's Bethel Mission, Seamen's Bethel and Portland Seamen's Bethel Church.

The Portland Seamen's Friend's Society, currently in Westbrook, Maine, continues to support seamen financially and spiritually in Maine. They provide a small stipend to mariners who *"spent their lives on the sea, and now, through current circumstances beyond their control, are considered indigent."* [8]

References cited:

1. Rodway, Charles B. "Paper on Seamen's Missions." MS-69. Series Ia. Folder 1. Maine Maritime Museum.
2. "Annual Report for the Year 1938." Portland Seamen's Friend Society. New York: National Group of Seamen's Agencies, 1938. MS-69. Series Ic. Folder 15. Maine Maritime Museum.
3. Rodway, Charles B. "Paper on Seamen's Missions." MS-69. Series Ia. Folder 1. Maine Maritime Museum.
4. *Ibid.*
5. "Annual Report for the Year 1939." Portland Seamen's Friend Society. New York: National Group of Seamen's Agencies, 1938. MS-69. Series Ic. Folder 15. Maine Maritime Museum.
6. "Annual Report for the Year 1938." Portland Seamen's Friend Society. New York: National Group of Seamen's Agencies, 1938. MS-69. Series Ic. Folder 15. Maine Maritime Museum.
7. "Portland Seamen's Friend Society." On-line source. http://mainemaritimealumni.org/Fall2011.pdf. 18 June 2012.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Oxford English Dictionary

Sailors' Snug Harbor

The Sailors' Snug Harbor was founded by Robert Richard Randal (wealthy merchant and member of the Marine Society) of New York City. Randall bequeathed his entire estate for the establishment and maintenance of a home for "aged, decrepit and worn out sailors."[1] This estate was a farm of twenty acres on Manhattan Island. The building site for the Sailors' Snug Harbor was situated on Staten Island, New York. In 1831-1832, the Sailors' Snug Harbor was constructed and fifty sailors were admitted the following year. The enclosed grounds were of about one hundred acres and three buildings. Eventually, there were over fifty structures with eight main buildings used for dormitories and mess halls. Rooms held one to five sailors. The home housed 900 residents at one time and was the first welfare institution for sailors. The Board of Trustees remarked that Sailors' Snug Harbor:

> *"shall be a home for where our worn-out and disabled sailors may spend their declining years in peace, comfort and self-respect."*[2]

The home was composed of a working farm, dairy, bakery, chapel, sanatorium, hospital, music halls and cemetery. The Sailors' Snug Harbor became one of the wealthiest charitable institutions in New York by 1907 and thrived there for over 140 years.[3] The Harbor was

relocated to Sea Level, North Carolina in the early 1970's as a result of raised Medicare costs and inflation. The organization continues to help retired seamen in need through the Mariner's Outreach Program.[4] Today the original location is an eighty-three acre city park with a number of occupants including one named Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden.

References cited:

1. "The Sailor's Snug Harbor." MS-69. Series IV. Folder 44. Maine Maritime Museum.
2. *Ibid.*
3. "History of Snug Harbor." Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden. On-line source. http://www.mywebdesign.us/snug/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/History-Snug-Harbor1.pdf. 14 June 2012.
4. "A Brief History of Sailors Snug Harbor." http://www.sunymaritime.edu/stephenblucelibrary/sailorssnugharbor/webpages/index.html. On-line source. 14 June 2012.

Biographical Notes

Charles Burton Rodway

Charles Burton Rodway was born to George Rodway and Liza Burton on September 9, 1889 in Kingwell, Newfoundland, Canada. His father, George, was a fisherman who spent forty-two years as master of a Grand Banks fishing schooner. In his early days, Rodway spent time on his father's fishing schooner as a seaman where he learned about lives of fishermen. As an adult, he became a licensed life boatman (1937), able body seaman (1937) and master for steam or motor vessels (1942). He was also licensed as a pastor in where he gave sermons at the Portland Seamen's Friend Society.

Rodway came to Portland, Maine to commence waterfront work in 1932. He was active in seamen's welfare services for over thirty years. In particular, Rodway was the superintendent and pastor for the Portland Seamen's Friend Society in Portland, Maine from 1933 to 1959.

He married Florence A. (b. September 22, 1892) and they had children George, Marjorie, Rudy, Frank, Lillian, Bernice, Ralph, Charles and Claudia. The family immigrated to America via St. Albans, Vermont in May 1924 from Canada. They lived in Andover, Massachusetts in 1930 where Rodway was a silk salesman. Rodway was naturalized on July 6, 1937 in Portland, Maine.

His two sons, George and Frank, actively sailed in the American Merchant Marine. George sailed as a chief engineer rose up through the ranks. Frank sailed as a navigator on tankers plying the coast to Portland.

Florence died on July 29, 1975. Charles B. Rodway died on April 17, 1977 in Portland.

References

1. Fisherman's Relief. Outgoing-Correspondence. MS-69. Folder 10. Outgoing correspondence, July 1, 1941. Maine Maritime Museum

2. "Lewis Pierce, Administrator DBNCTA of the Estate of Joseph How, Petitioner in Equity (Seamen's Bethel Society-Petitioner)." MS-69. Folder 38. Legal Documents. Maine Maritime Museum.
3. Facsimile. Legal documents. MS-69. Folder 39. Maine Maritime Museum.

Joseph R. How: Joseph How was born on July 22, 1820 to Daniel How (b. abt. 1795) and Eliza Thrasher (b. abt. 1794) in Portland, Maine. He was listed as a mariner in the 1850 and 1860 censuses. The Portland City Directory of 1869 records him as a sea captain living at 12 Hancock with his mother. Upon his death, he bequeathed his estate to the founding of a home for indigent seamen. Furthermore, he authorized and empowered an executor to invest the said property and income thereof and to use and employ the same in such manner as will do the most good to the class of indigent seamen. This estate supplied funds to the Portland Seamen's Bethel and the Portland Maritime Society, so they could aid seamen. Joseph How died on October 26, 1870 in Portland, Maine. He is buried at the Portland Eastern Cemetery.

References

1. "Memorandum of Law." MS-69. Series II. Folder 38. Maine Maritime Museum.
2. http: //familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/F4CV-352. On-line source. 18 June 2012.
3. http://search.ancestry.com. On-line source. 18 June 2012.
4. http://search.ancestry.com/iexec?htx=View&r=an&dbid=2469&iid=13058062&fn =Joseph&ln=How&st=r&ssrc=&pid=776148825. On-line source. 20 June 2012.

Scope and Content Notes

The Portland Seamen's Friend Society records are primarily documents for the Portland Seamen's Bethel from 1926 to 1975. The Portland Seamen's Friend Society provided food, entertainment, libraries, lodging, visitation, spiritual needs and general advocacy for sailors. The records include background history of the society, correspondence, financial records, and seamen's papers. There are also correspondence and legal documents relating to the Joseph R. How Trust Fund, correspondence and literature from the Sailor's Snug Harbor, papers relating to the Seamen's Agencies Group of the National Conference of Social Work, and personal papers.

Correspondence includes incoming and outgoing letters and grouped in the following manner: general correspondence, correspondence relating to donations and/or financial support, seamen letters of appreciation, seamen letters asking assistance, British Sailor's Society, and Fisherman's Relief. The financial records include income and expenditures and superintendent's accounting reports. The collection also contains fragments of certificates of discharge papers for seamen.

The Joseph R. How Trust Fund relates to the settlement of the How Estate. This trust in turn assisted both the Portland Seamen's Bethel and the Portland Marine Society with helping indigent seaman financially.

The history of Sailors Snug Harbor is addressed in the collection as well. There are incoming and outgoing correspondence concerning the admission of Captain Joseph L. Fiander to Sailors' Snug Harbor. Lastly, there are some personal papers of Charles B. Rodway and his son, Frank C., comprised mostly of licenses and certificates

Organization and Description of Series

Series I. Portland Seamen's Friend Society
- Subseries Ia. Background History
- Subseries Ib. Correspondence
- Subseries Ic. Financial Records
- Subseries Id. Seamen's Papers
- Subseries Ie. Miscellaneous

Series II. The Joseph R. How Trust Fund/Estate
Series III. National Conference of Social Work
Series IV. Sailors' Snug Harbor
Series V. Personal Papers of Charles B. and Frank C. Rodway

Series I. Portland Seamen's Friend Society

Subseries Ia. Background History (n.d., 1933, [1937], 1952): This includes a resolution for the Seamen's Bethel. A "Paper on Seamen's Missions" written by Charles B. Rodway and "Collective Bargaining" article by George Rodway to Frank Rodway. There is also a Portland Seamen's Friend Society pamphlet.

Subseries Ib. Correspondence (n.d., 1933-1959, 1975): Both incoming and outgoing correspondence sorted into five groups: General, Financial, Seamen's Letters, British Sailors Society and Fisherman's Relief. Much of the correspondence is with Charles B. Rodway, the superintendent of the Portland Seamen's Bethel. The seamen letters are personal and give insight into their emotions, needs and lifestyles.

Subseries Ic. Financial Records (n.d. 1933-1947): Monthly and annual financial reports are part of this subseries.

Subseries Id. Seamen's Papers (1926-1933): These are fragments of certificate of discharge papers for seamen.

Subseries Ie. Miscellaneous (1937). Menu from S..S. *Baron Blythswood*, (Steamship), Christmas 1937 and bulletin from the Maine Seacoast Missionary Society, 1939

Series II. The Joseph R. How Trust Fund/Estate (n.d., 1955-1958): Legal documents for Joseph H. How estate. These include court petitioner records for the Portland Marine Society and the Portland Seamen's Bethel Society. There are a memorandum of law and final decree for the case as well. Correspondence relates to the estate and defining the term seamen in the will in addition to requests for financial assistance from the How Fund by seamen (Sherman H. Callahan and Joseph O'Hare). This trust in turn assisted both the Portland Seamen's Bethel and the Portland Marine Society with helping indigent seamen financially.

Series III. Seamen's Agencies Group, National Conference of Social Work (n.d., 1934-1942): Correspondence pertain to the National Conference of Social Work. Papers address national conferences attempts to define and fulfill the current needs of seamen via welfare work. Social organizations from all over the nation attended in hopes to benefit sailors. This series includes a receipt for Charles B. Rodway attendance at a conference in 1935. There are also

programs for such conferences. Lastly, there are miscellaneous newspaper clippings addressing Seamen's Agencies in addition to a directory and bulletin of the National Group of Seamen's Agencies, a special group of the National Conference of Social Work.

Series IV. Sailor's Snug Harbor (1937-1940): Brief history of Sailors' Snug Harbor. Incoming and outgoing correspondence pertaining to the admittance of Captain Joseph L. Fiander to Sailors' Snug Harbor.

Series V. Personal Papers of Charles B. and Frank C. Rodway (1936-1948): Charles B. Rodway certificate of efficiency to life boatman, certificate of service to able seaman and first aid certificate. Charles B. Rodway license to master of steam and motor vessels. Diocese of Maine license to serve as lay reader. Methodist Church local preacher's license for Charles B. Rodway. There are also passes for Charles B. Rodway to Isthmian Steamship Lines and Pennsylvania Shipping Company. Finally, a certificate of discharge (facsimile) for Frank Rodway from the *Oakey L. Alexander* (Screw steamer, freight) is in this series.

MS-69 Portland Seamen's Bethel Records
Finding Aid

Box# Folder#

SERIES I. Portland Seamen's Bethel

Subseries Ia. History and Background

1 1 — Resolution, 1933

— "Seamen's Mission," by Charles B. Rodway, [1937]

— [Purpose and Function] n.d.

2 "Collective Bargaining in the Maritime Industry," George Rodway to Frank Rodway, 1952

3 Pamphlet, "Portland Seamen's Friend Society," 1935

Subseries Ib. Correspondence

General

4 — Incoming, 1933-1940, 1975

5 — Outgoing, 1935-1941

6 Financial Support / Donations

— Incoming, n.d., 1933-41

— Outgoing, 1934-41

Seamen Letters

... of Appreciation

7 — C. B. Rodway, incoming, n.d., 1933-49

Assistance

8 — Incoming, 1933-59

— Outgoing, 1937, 1947, 1958

9 British Sailor's Society

— Incoming—C. B. Rodway, 1933-1948

— Outgoing—C. B. Rodway, 1942, 1946-1947

10 Fisherman's Relief

Incoming, 1934, 1940-1941

Outgoing, 1940-1941

Surgeon General Thomas Parran to Congressman James C. Oliver, 1941

Subseries Ic. Financial Records

11 Monthly Reports (income, expenditure), n.d., 1939-1942

12 Annual Reports, 1938-1947 (includes historical accounts)

Subseries Id. Seamen's Papers

13 Certificates of Discharge, various seamen, 1926-1933

Subseries If. Miscellaneous

14 Menu, S/S Baron Bythswood (Steamship), Christmas 1937

SERIES II. Joseph R. How Trust Fund/Estate

15 Correspondence, 1957-1958

16 Legal Documents, n.d., 1955-57

SERIES III. Seamen's Agencies Group, National Conference of Social Work

17 Correspondence—National Conference of Social Work, n.d., 1934-42

18 Receipt, 1935

19 Programs, 1937-1938, 1942

20 Miscellaneous papers (newspaper clippings, directory) n.d., 1937-1938

SERIES IV. Sailors' Snug Harbor

21 History, 1938

22 Correspondence

— Incoming, 1937, 1940

— Outgoing, 1937-1938

SERIES V. Personal Papers of Charles B. and Frank C. Rodway

Charles B. Rodway

23 Certificates (Lifeboat Man, Able Seaman, First Aid) 1937, 1941-1942

24 Licenses (Master, Preacher, Lay Reader), 1942, 1948

25 Passes, 1936, 1938

26 Short biography on Charles B. Rodway and his work at the society, n.d.

Frank C. Rodway

27 Certificate of Discharge, *Oakey L. Alexander* (Screw steamer, freight), 1941